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LETTER DATED 30 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 30 September 1998 from Mr. Tariq Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, concerning the statements made by former inspector Scott Ritter that were published in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz and the American newspaper The Washington Post in their issues for 29 September 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 30 September 1998 from the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

The statements made by former inspector Scott Ritter to the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz and in the article published by the American newspaper The Washington Post in their issues for 29 September 1998 (see appendix II) confirm certain egregious facts to which Iraq has long been calling attention in its statements and in its letters addressed to you and to the Security Council.

1. We have all along been calling attention to the fact that the Special Commission, which operates in the name of the Security Council and the United Nations with the outward appearance of implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions, maintains close links with the intelligence agencies of States that pursue policies that are inimical to Iraq and seek objectives that bear no relation to the resolutions of the Security Council and their stated goals, namely the United States and Israel. It is clear from the information now available that this linkage pertains to the following sensitive areas:

(a) A number of the officials of the Special Commission were nominated for recruitment by their governments. Effectively, their ties have continued to be to their governments, and this is true in particular of the Americans among them. Scott Ritter has not been the only one. All of those who occupy the sensitive positions in the Special Commission, and particularly that of Deputy Executive Chairman, are Americans with the same characteristics as Scott Ritter.

(b) When it seeks to lend credence to its mendacious allegations, to engage in open espionage against Iraq and to precipitate crises, the main sources of the information used by the Special Commission are the United States and Israel.

2. We have all along been warning that the working methods of the Special Commission are not those of a United Nations body. The Special Commission behaves like an intelligence agency and not like a United Nations entity specializing in disarmament and disarmament-related monitoring. It is clear from the statements made by Scott Ritter that the Special Commission has not been content with information gathering alone but has also discussed its methods of operation in Iraq with United States and Israeli intelligence agencies. We have also always cautioned that, in the exercise of its functions, the Commission might be directly influenced by instructions given by the United States. The new information in question exposes this fact in a shameful manner.

3. We have always cautioned that the Special Commission, which is formally linked with the Security Council and with the Secretariat, should not operate in a unilateral manner and without regard for its duly authorized terms of reference.

Our assessment of the methods and intentions of the Special Commission and the Americans who work for it is confirmed by two factors in addition to the other considerations we have mentioned:

(a) The information that Scott Ritter was seeking and soliciting while carrying out inspections in Iraq was not information that had any connection with the disarmament requirements of resolution 687 (1991) but intelligence-related information concerning the Iraqi armed forces and the Iraqi national security agencies. I am sending you herewith a list of the kinds of information that he was seeking while carrying out inspections (see appendix I).

(b) Scott Ritter led or was a member of 28 inspection teams. In none of these inspections was it determined that any weapons or weapon components had been hidden at any of the 475 sites inspected. This belies the allegations of the Special Commission concerning the concealment of weapons, it confirms the mendacity of Scott Ritter and his like in the Special Commission, and it exposes the real objectives underlying their activities in Iraq and their false allegations.

As these facts show, the Special Commission has in reality become a dangerous entity whose present composition and practices threaten the very credibility and impartiality of the United Nations and the performance of its functions under the Charter.

These facts, revealed by the staff of the Special Commission itself, confirm the grounds of our complaints and fears that the real role of this entity has not been to monitor the implementation of Security Council resolutions but deliberately to perpetuate the embargo imposed on Iraq and to spy on the country. They confirm that Iraq was justified, truthful and accurate with regard to all the concerns it raised in connection with the Special Commission and in its objections to its conduct, allegations and pronouncements.

As a Member State of the United Nations, we seek lawful protection from an entity that operates in the name of the United Nations and the Security Council. In our letter of 5 August 1998 addressed to you (S/1998/718, annex), we identified a number of desiderata that would ensure a modicum of such protection. We further urge you to institute an official inquiry into the actions, behaviour and ties of the Special Commission in order to safeguard the credibility, impartiality and good reputation of the United Nations.

We call for a halt to the activities of the United States U-2 spy plane in Iraq, since it has now been confirmed that the information and imagery it obtains go to the United States and Israeli intelligence services for use in their schemes to threaten the security and sovereignty of Iraq. A French aircraft has now begun to be used for observation, and this may be adequate for the Special Commission's purposes.

(Signed) Tariq AZIZ
Deputy Prime Minister

Appendix I

Inspection procedures used by Scott Ritter in the inspections he undertook in Iraq

Taking the names of commanders and a number of officers from the commanders' board displayed at military unit headquarters, and examining their personal files.

Examining files relating to military exercises, particularly those of the Special Republican Guard, and to training programmes.

Examining maps relating to unit movements.

Examining the encipherment methods in use.

Examining telecommunications networks.

Examining correspondence in the files of security and intelligence officers.

Examining weapons emplacement files.

Examining order sequence and inter-unit liaison files.

Examining the duty files of military units entrusted with special tasks.

Identifying the functions of buildings at a particular site in accordance with maps drawn on the basis of intelligence sources (the U-2 spy plane, satellites and other sources).

Examining documents in the confidential section of the Iraqi intelligence service, at military intelligence and at the leadership's special protection unit.

Examining munitions stores and weapons racks.

Appendix II

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Tuesday, September 29, 1998

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Hide and seek with the palace guard

Former UN arms inspector Scott Ritter tells Ha'aretz that the UN inspectors had broken Iraq's code for hiding missiles - just before the inspections were stopped

By David Makovsky

NEW YORK - Scott Ritter knows Iraq pretty well by now. A veteran arms inspector for the United Nations Special Commission charged with tracking Iraq's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, Ritter, who recently resigned his post, was intimately involved in the UN effort to keep Saddam Hussein honest.

Over an extended period, Ritter and other inspectors worked to break the code Saddam was using to issue instructions involving the movement of weapons Iraq wanted to keep hidden from inspectors. Well into this year, the cat and mouse game being played in Iraq made regular headlines around the world.

What few know is that the UN inspectors, with Israeli help, eventually broke the Iraqi code and were on the verge of a major breakthrough in uncovering concealed weaponry. Then, this summer, the inspections were halted. That's when Ritter quit his job - out of pure frustration, he says.

In this exclusive interview with Ha'aretz, Ritter reveals how weapons were being moved around in Iraq, what role Israel played in helping the inspections team, and his own personal disillusionment with the United States for what he characterizes as its lack of support for the inspections program, public hype to the contrary notwithstanding.

How did Iraq conceal weapons from UNSCOM?

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"In April 1991, Saddam Hussein issued a presidential directive ordering that Iraq lie to the Special Commission [UNSCOM] and to the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency], [and that Iraq] would keep [its mass destruction] capabilities.

"In May 1991, the materials that were kept were turned over under instruction of the president to the Special Security Organization (SSO) and Special Republican Guard (SRG). These are presidential security forces."

How big is this special organization?

"The SSO is one of the most secretive organizations in Iraq. It probably numbers around 5,000 people. The SRG is the military arm that had four brigades, around 15 battalions, and is about the size of a division - maybe 20,000 people."

Was the special organization set up for this purpose of concealment?

"The special organization was set up to protect the president of Iraq. Back in the 1980s this special security organization also had a responsibility for protecting Iraq's weapons... So they have been linked from the very beginning with these weapons, but today they have the responsibility of hiding them from the Special Commission."

Is their job basically to conduct one big shell game?

"That's right, it's a shell game. Now what you're getting to is the problem I faced. We were beating our heads against the wall going after the shell game. We're playing their game. I said to [then] chairman [of UNSCOM, Rolf Ekeus, that] rather than going after the shells, let's go after the man moving the shells.

"One reason why I went to Israel and started working with the Israelis is because I believe that the methodology that Israel uses to hunt down terrorists are the same methodologies we needed to use to go after the weapons of mass destruction. So I asked Israel to help the commission formulate analytical models, analytical techniques and to advise on operational issues."

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When was that?

"I first approached [Israel] in 1994. We started working in 1995."

Was it helpful?

"I can honestly say that if it weren't for Israel, the Special Commission would not have been able to carry out the anti-concealment effort."

What was Israel's unique contribution?

"I can just say Israel had a good reputation of being innovative, of being capable, of being good. And we approached Israel due to all those factors. It's Tel Aviv that can be hit by these missiles, not New York City, and we were actually, frankly speaking, a little dismayed with the lack of intensity, the lack of enthusiasm, that emanated from Washington on this issue. The U.S. treated it more as an academic exercise and I thought Israel treated it as it is - a matter of life and death. So we came to Israel."

Were your trips and cooperation with Israel authorized by the head of UNSCOM? Was it also approved by the U.S.?

"Ekeus started this, yes. It was all authorized by Ekeus. It was a totally authorized thing and it was approved by the U.S. government. Every aspect was approved by the U.S. government."

Who ran the Iraqi concealment program?

"Abed Hamid Mahmoud, the presidential secretary. He is probably the most powerful man in Iraq after the president. He is Saddam's bodyguard, confidant, right-hand man. Qusay Hussein [Saddam's son] cannot go the president without going through Abed Hamid Mahmoud. He is the gatekeeper. He is the man responsible for coordinating the national security policy of Iraq. He's the secret power in Iraq. He runs what's called the joint committee, [which] coordinates all the national security...

"He's the one who brings people in and gives them

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concealment tasks. He's the one who [manages] the concealment operation center that monitors all the stuff that is moved around Iraq. Abed uses the special security organization [SSO] as the tool for concealment.

"I can name officers within the special security organization who did conc..alment, and I can tell [the UNSCOM] chairman, how, when, where, and why specific acts of concealment took place. That's how good we got. I can't say how we did it. But I can say how good we got.

"So we started with nothing and in the end we were down to where we knew when, where, how, why, who and what was happening. A..d that's why the frustration. It was not a single source of information. We used everything that we had available to us. And that's why what happened in July and August [when the U.S. halted inspections] was so frustrating. Because now that we have identified how they're doing it, and now that we get the kind of information we need on the timely basis we need, we're inside their decision-making cycle. We're reacting before Iraq can react."

You really could get the information before they move the shell?

"Before they move the shell. And I got stuck. That's why I was so mad. Because I finally came up with the solution. I broke the code. We untied the Gordian knot. We figured it out. We had the problem solved and now we just need to go do the job. It took us three years, but we solved the problem.

"But the U.S. didn't let us. Not only didn't they let us, they won't let us - because to go do it ratchets it up to the ultimate level of confrontation. Because there's no way Iraq will allow us to inspect the people who need to be inspected. We're talking about the people closest to Saddam Hussein. We're talking about the security forces, the personal security forces of Saddam, we're talking about the family of Saddam. These are the people doing concealment.

"It basically works like a Mafia organization. When you organize crime [or set up a] terrorist organization, you have cells. And in order to become a cell leader,

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you have to be trusted by the family, so you have to be very close to the family. So the people being selected are direct blood relatives of Saddam. There are primarily Tikritis (people from Saddam's hometown) or there are alliances of marriage to other tribes, like the Alduries. People of this nature are also close to Saddam. Abed is the one who says I can trust this man or I can't. Abott does the interviews. That's all compartmentalized. [Even] if you get one cell, you don't what the other guy is doing.

"Now the cells can rely on a larger infrastructure, the Special Security Organization, the Special Republican Guard. These elite organizations are populated by people loyal to Saddam. Now they don't have a mission per se of concealment, but you if you need a truck, you can go to that Special Republican Guard and vehicle resources. If you need 15-man working party, you can go to that Special Republican Guard unit and get 15 soldiers to do something for you. So you have the resources of the SSO and SRG at your disposal to do you want to hide these weapons. You're given vehicles, you're given money, you're given a safe house. You're given the responsibility to go out and find a location to hide this stuff.

"A lot of people will go out the way it's known you to go to relatives. You go to your uncle who has a farm in Samara, and you say on that farm, 'I need to use that shed. I can't tell you what for, it's a family business.' Thirty days later, they leave and he has a soldier on his team. He asks: 'Do you have a relative near here?' They go to the cousin and say, 'We need to use your farm and hide stuff on your farm.' And that's how they move stuff around."

How many people do you think are involved?

"I think we are talking about hundreds of people involved. It is probably several cells doing chemicals, several cells doing ballistic missiles, several cells doing biological [components], and a cell doing nuclear [devices]. You might be talking 50, 60 sites in Iraq at any one time with all that. Then you have the groups responsible for monitoring... personnel, they you have a group responsible for monitoring UNSCOM - trying to collect intelligence on what UNSCOM is doing. This is significant operation.

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"And Iraq has this regime of terror and control. The thing about the joint committee is that they can tap into any resource in Iraq."

Did Israel help crack the code of concealment?

"We used the methodology that Israel was considered to be the best at in the world. We cracked the code, not Israel. Israel was not in the lead on this, but I can say that UNSCOM could not have solved this problem without the help of Israel. It's absolutely essential. We could not have done what we did. We couldn't even come close without the help of Israel.

"I was in charge when I went to Israel. Israel responded. My requirements and my tasking came from the executive chairman. Israel did not control the Special Commission. Israel didn't want to control the Special Commission. Israel was a fair player on all of this. It was extremely responsible."

Could you further characterize the relationship with Israel?

"I will leave it to the Israelis to do that."

Can you say how many times you were in Israel?

"I was there a lot. From 1994 until 1998 I was there a lot."

Can you comment on the FBI investigation into your links with Israel?

"It's the most outrageous that I ever encountered with the United States government. I was sent to the Special Commission by the U.S. government to work for the executive chairman. Those are my orders. So I did that. I was told that strength of the Special Commission would be in its independence, that the Special Commission could not be seen as a tool of any country and that I have to help make the Special Commission independent. I did that. I succeeded.

"In 1994, we need some new methodologies that we weren't getting from the United States, so we went to Israel.

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"I went to the executive chairman (Ekeus) and we raised the issue of approaching Israel, and he approved. I have to say that as an American citizen, I went to the U.S. government and told them that I was doing this and they didn't stop me. When the relationship really began in earnest starting in July of '95, everything I did in Israel was approved by the executive chairman. Everything we did was consistent with the mandate given by the [UN] Security Council. And everything I did was made known to and approved by the U.S. government."

Every step of the way?

"Every step of the way. Now they didn't agree with a lot of what I did. They didn't agree at all. They didn't like the idea of UNSCOM becoming this independent, nor UNSCOM having a capable partner like Israel supporting us. They weren't happy with this at all. They tried to stop it every step of the way. But I kept them informed. I had their approval and everything was approved by the executive chairman.

"That's why it just frustrates me they would consider that I was committing espionage. The bad guy here is Saddam. Israel was helping UNSCOM go after Iraq's prohibited capability. I didn't receive any money from Israel, I didn't receive any favor from Israel. I didn't receive squat from Israel. I got a shake of the hand, a pat on the back. The key thing is I was using Israel. Israel wasn't using me.

"Certain officials in the U.S. government are so narrow minded that they can't see that. Israel never made an offer of money, never made an attempt to pay me or influence me whatsoever. Ever.

"Yeah, we had friendly relations. They are some of the most professional people I ever met in my life. They are also great people, wonderful people. I count many of them as friends. I would hope in this future when this all calms down, there is a way that we can stay in touch as friends. But the relationship was purely a professional relationship."

Was it the CIA that instigated the FBI investigation?

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"The bottom line is that it was the CIA that raised the concerns. They said that the relationship that Israel and Ritter had could be an espionage relationship. Even though they knew all the facts and they approved everything. They turned it over to the FBI and the FBI ran with it and then it became sought of a self-continuing effort. Every time I went to Israel, the pile got thicker. Every time I did my job, the FBI just collected more data, saying its espionage. It was terrible."

When did the FBI investigation become known to you?

"I knew in January, February 1997 that the U.S. had a concern about the nature of the work and I worked very closely with the government to try and talk about what their concern was. And it came down to basically bureaucratic jealously. You know, I have a better relationship with the Israelis than they do. They are not in control. They lost control.

"I'm an American. Israel can't have an intelligence relationship with an American that is not controlled by the U.S. These are their concerns. I said basically if that's it, the 'tough luck. Because, you sent me here to work for a case. You told me to be independent. I'm doing what you told me to do, and I'm succeeding. So unless you give me a direct order to stop, and I'm always an American, you give me a direct order, you say stop, I will stop today. You ask me a question, I will answer it.'

"I'm not hiding anything from them. But they never said stop.

"I think they were concerned that I was providing Israel with classified U.S. information. Now that has been resolved. I think the CIA, after starting this ball rolling, realized they made a horrible mistake and they've actually put out an official ruling that said that Ritter never had a security clearance or didn't have a security clearance while he was working with UNSCOM. It is illegal for the U.S. to provide classified information to somebody who doesn't have a clearance. Therefore, any information provided by the United States to Ritter was unclassified. So Ritter could not have not have turned over classified information to Israel and that was the end of it. That should have closed it. It's not. And you

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have to ask the FBI why it is not closed today."

What can you say about the Israeli officials you met?

"First is the professionalism. The people I dealt with were dedicated, professional, smart. They worked their asses off. When you go down to Washington you are overwhelmed with the 9 to 5 mentality. There wasn't this 9 to 5 mentality. This was national security. Plus they think out of the box."

What does that mean 'to think out of the box?'

"In America, you have rules. We're going to address this problem. Let's read the rules here. They say we can think this, we cannot do this. That's how we are going to solve this. That's how we're going to do it.

"The Israelis are: 'What's another way of looking at this? How else can we do this? Let's think of alternatives here. Is there another way we can solve this problem?' The Israelis were innovative and courageous in terms of putting forward ideas. They were not afraid to have an idea shot down. Again, professional. A level of trust developed.

"The Israelis looked at me and didn't see a United Nations officials, or an American. It's all professional. It's somebody whom they can respect, whom can they can work with. That's what impressed me about them. And the fact that they were always sympathetic with the cause. I never once felt when I was over there that I was somehow imposing on them or somehow inconveniencing them. When I was over there, we were a team. We were all going for the same cause. We were working really hard. They are good people."

A view of what Iraq has

NEW YORK - Following is former UN arms inspector Scott Ritter's assessment of what weapons Iraq is currently hiding. He bases his assessment on data derived from various Iraqi documents in UNSCOM's possession and reports provided by reliable Iraqi defectors.

* Nuclear - Ritter notes that so long as Iraq does not have a fissionable core, it does not possess a nuclear bomb. At the same time, he believes Iraq has three implosion-type nuclear devices, which would become

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bombs once Iraq obtains the fissionable material.

* Chemical - A recent UNSCOM inspection of Air Force headquarters uncovered a document showing that Iraq overdeclared the number of bombs dropped and the tonnage of chemical agent used during the Iran-Iraq War. As a result, several thousand bombs and seven hundred tons of chemical agent that were listed as expended may well still be in Iraq's possession.

* Biological - There is evidence pointing to the possibility that Iraq tested biological weapons on live humans in 1995.

* Missiles - Iraq claims that it has never produced an operational ballistic missile, however UNSCOM believes that Iraq still has an operational ballistic missile force of between 5 and 12 al-Hussein missiles which were partially disassembled in 1997 and dispersed to various locations. They can be reassembled on short notice. Iraq is also believed to possess various components for some 25 additional missiles. Mobile missile launchers can easily be manufactured at any time.

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Appendix III

Israel Gave Key Help To U.N. Team in Iraq

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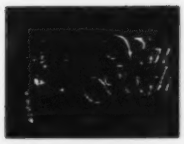

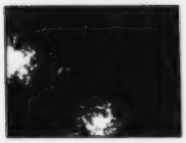

Israel Gave Key Help To U.N. Team in Iraq

U-2 Photos Among Intelligence Shared

By Barton Gellman
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, September 29, 1998; Page A01

For more than four years, United Nations arms inspectors have obtained many of their best leads on forbidden Iraqi weapons through a secretive and diplomatically risky channel from the Israeli government, according to knowledgeable sources in the United States, Israel and the United Nations.

After a wary start born of Israel's long isolation at the world body, Israel began providing the U.N. Special Commission with increasingly detailed and sensitive intelligence on its Arab adversary, which launched 40 Scud missiles at Haifa and Tel Aviv during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Among its most important contributions, from the U.N. panel's point of view, were significant leads on the existence of a biological weapons program and the first concrete evidence that Iraq had a systematic campaign of deception to conceal weapons programs it was legally obliged to declare and dismantle.

The two-way exchange of information, which included meetings with the director and deputy director of Israeli military intelligence, eventually involved Israeli analysis of aerial photography taken by American U-2 surveillance planes, provision of raw reports from defectors and other human sources, and Israeli processing of other forms of information obtained by the special commission, known as UNSCOM.

According to three officials with direct knowledge of the relationship, Israel had become by July 1995 the most important single contributor among the dozens of U.N. member states that have supplied information to UNSCOM since its creation in April 1991. The United States, by all

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accounts, remained a major supplier of information, as well as UNSCOM's most important material and political backer. But the arrival of fresh Israeli intelligence after most U.S. tips were exploited made for what one official called "this great big candy store of nice goodies."

There is no evidence that Israel directed UNSCOM's activity in any way, or that the U.N. panel gave information improperly or for Israel's national benefit. But Israel and UNSCOM have protected the operation among their most sensitive secrets, fearing that Iraq would use it to feed propaganda attacks that already featured accusations of a Zionist conspiracy behind the commission's work.

Even without evidence, those charges have resonated among intellectuals and in the government-controlled media in much of the Arab world, including pro-Western Persian Gulf states on which the American-backed U.N. panel has relied for practical and diplomatic support.

Ewen Buchanan, the spokesman for UNSCOM, said yesterday that the U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding Iraq's disarmament call upon all member states to assist the panel "in discharging its mandate," and more than 40 countries have "helped us in the form of experts, information, equipment, finance and in-kind help like laboratory analysis or helicopters."

"As a general principle," he added, "we will not confirm or deny our dealings with particular states."

Israel's U.N. ambassador, Dore Gold, consulted with superiors when asked about the cooperation. When he telephoned back, he said he could say only that "I cannot give any official Israeli response."

Those willing to speak about the relationship, from UNSCOM's point of view, said the commission had no choice but to seek assistance from foreign intelligence agencies once the extent of Iraq's concealment efforts became clear. Israel had the means and motive to assist the disarmament panel, they said, but other adversaries of Iraq -- including Iran and some neighboring Arab states -- did so as well.

"I think it's perfectly valid we had contact with the Israelis," said Tim Trevan, a Briton who until 1995 was political adviser to Rolf Ekeus, UNSCOM's executive

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chairman until last year. "There's nothing to be ashamed about with that contact."

Trevan, according to other sources, made the first chance link between the commission and the Jewish state. Ekeus had dispatched him to a January 1994 academic conference on disarmament in Delphi, Greece. There he sat in the audience as David Ivri, then director general of Israel's Defense Ministry, made disparaging comments about UNSCOM and hinted it was not finding all of Iraq's hidden weapon programs.

After Trevan stood up to criticize Ivri -- arguing that Israel should "put up or shut up," as one participant recalled -- another Israeli pulled him aside and introduced him to Brig. Gen. Yakov Amidror, who was then deputy director of Israel's Military Intelligence organization, known by its Hebrew acronym as Aman. Three months later, in April 1994, Amidror flew secretly to New York for a meeting with Ekeus, said sources with firsthand knowledge.

Scott Ritter, the U.N. inspector who resigned in protest last month, was a central conduit in the unfolding relationship, by his own account and those of others familiar with the details. Other UNSCOM staff members who traveled to the Aman headquarters in Tel Aviv's Kirya complex included Frenchman Didier Louis, German Norbert Reinecke and Russian Nikita Smidovich.

The Clinton administration, which was aware of the relationship in detail, generally supported Israel's aid to UNSCOM, but worried about the political difficulties that might be caused by public disclosure. Even so, the first public hint of the relationship came in a leak from the U.S. government aimed at discrediting Ritter, disclosing that he was under FBI investigation for his intelligence contacts with Israel.

Sources said that investigation remains open, and the FBI declined to comment. Current and former U.S. government officials at the policymaking level and current and former UNSCOM officials said, without dissent, that Ritter's exchange of information with Israel was approved by his superiors at the commission and, in principle, by the United States.

But some of those officials said there were concerns about Ritter's links with Israel that fell short of criminal

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suspicion. Ritter on several occasions brought canisters of U-2 film for processing in Israel, and from time to time allowed Israeli technicians to make copies, sources said.

There is apparently an unresolved legal question about the ownership of that U-2 imagery, which is normally classified secret in the United States. Washington had lent the aircraft and its product to UNSCOM. The imagery was stamped with the notation, "REL UNSCOM/IAEA ONLY," meaning that it could be released to the special commission and to the International Atomic Energy Agency. U.S. government sources said the CIA's general counsel wrote to the Justice Department, in the context of the Ritter investigation, that the release to UNSCOM was legally equivalent to declassification for purposes of U.S. espionage law.

Four independent sources with firsthand knowledge said that Ritter and his colleagues worked with the explicit consent of Ekeus, the Swedish diplomat who was UNSCOM's first executive chairman, and of Richard Butler, Ekeus's Australian successor. The U.N. panel was aware that Israel -- like other cooperating nations, not least the United States -- derived valuable military information from the relationship, but UNSCOM insisted it would provide only such information to Israel as would enable Israeli analysts to assist UNSCOM.

UNSCOM gave Israel U-2 photographs, for example, so that Israel could apply its own intelligence databases to the structures depicted, allowing the U.N. panel to combine information from many sources for a fuller picture. Those familiar with the relationship insist that UNSCOM never "traded" information in return for Israeli help. Still, the relationship eventually raised alarms among some in the U.S. government. Israel received so much American-shot imagery of Iraqi strategic facilities from UNSCOM, officials said, that the United States worried it could be held responsible in part if Israel used the pictures to select targets or flight routes for a strike on Iraq's nonconventional weapons.

There was no doubt that Israel had strong incentives. In 1981, as a French-built nuclear reactor neared completion, Israeli warplanes launched a preemptive strike to destroy the facility at Osirak. Nine years later, a few months before invading Kuwait, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein threatened publicly to "burn half of Israel" in what was

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taken to be a reference to chemical weapons.

Asked whether his cooperation with Israel validated long-standing Iraqi charges that he was an agent of Israeli intelligence, Ritter said he was not "America's spy or Israel's spy or anyone else's spy," but an inspector working on explicit authority of his superiors.

"That's a diversion," Ritter said. "It's typical Iraqi tactics. The commission wouldn't have had to undertake these extraordinary measures if Iraq had been forthcoming."

The commission went to Israel, he said, because it was not getting as much help as it wanted from Washington and London on the most sensitive forms of information-gathering and was looking for another source "with an open mind, with a proven track record of success."

In September 1994, Israel gave UNSCOM its first major contribution -- a detailed allegation that the Special Security Organization, run by Saddam Hussein's younger son Qusay, was organizing the deception and concealment operation. The tip included physical descriptions of trucks and depots used to move forbidden materials and documents around the country, sources said.

Later, Israeli information helped provide what sources described as a key to unlocking a biological weapons program Iraq had long denied: Israel passed along the tip that Oxoid, a company in Basingstoke, England, had sold Iraq 40 tons of a biological growth medium that the Baghdad government could not account for.

In October and December 1994, Ritter led delegations to Tel Aviv for a meeting with Maj. Gen. Uri Saguy, then the chief of Israeli military intelligence, and panels of analysts from other Israeli agencies.

Thereafter, Saguy dispatched analysts on a regular basis to New York for meetings with Ritter and his colleagues in hotel basements and out-of-the-way bars. Sometimes Amidror, Saguy's deputy, traveled personally.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 109
RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO
SELF-DETERMINATION

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 29 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the latest incident in which personnel and vehicles belonging to the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) were fired upon by the Indian army across the line of control in Neelam valley on 27 September 1998. The incident occurred in broad daylight from an Indian post only 150-200 metres away from the line of control. In view of the proximity of the location, no excuse for an identification mistake by India would be tenable. The UNMOGIP vehicles were flying the United Nations flag and were painted white with United Nations markings on either side.

You will recall that, in November 1994, two United Nations vehicles were also fired at by Indian troops in the same area. One of the vehicles was completely burnt and the observers barely escaped with their lives. Inaction by the United Nations authorities at that time has obviously encouraged the Indian troops to repeat such a blatant act.

While the Indians deny UNMOGIP the freedom of movement on their side, this incident is intended to restrict their movement in Azad Kashmir as well, in order to put a blanket on their intense firing activity across the line of control, and to prevent UNMOGIP from carrying out investigations on ceasefire violations. The Indians also wish to hide their atrocities inside Indian-held Kashmir by terrorizing the observers. Obviously, the Indian intention is to further marginalize the role of UNMOGIP, with the ultimate goal being its complete closure.

There is no doubt the Indian Government is fully involved in the incident and it was with their full knowledge and permission that the Indian army chose to target United Nations personnel.

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Fifty-third session
Agenda items 45, 93, 101, 102 and 110
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL
PEACE AND SECURITY
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC COOPERATION
CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL
HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 13 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit the text of a joint Kazakh-Russian communiqué on the State visit of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, to Kazakhstan on 12 and 13 October 1998 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 45, 93, 101, 102 and 110, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. ARYSTANBEKOVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of Kazakhstan to the
United Nations

(Signed) S. LAVROV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations

98-30452 (E)

ANNEX

Joint Kazakh-Russian communiqué on the State visit of the President of the Russian Federation to Kazakhstan

On 12 and 13 October 1998, at the invitation of the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, made a State visit to Kazakhstan.

During their talks, Mr. Nazarbaev and Mr. Yeltsin thoroughly discussed topical issues and prospects for Kazakh-Russian relations and held a comprehensive exchange of views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The heads of State noted with satisfaction that the multifaceted cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, which is of priority importance to both countries, is progressing steadily and becoming increasingly more dynamic.

They stressed that the Kazakh-Russian Declaration on Eternal Friendship and Alliance in the Twenty-first Century, signed by the Presidents in Moscow on 6 July 1998, was of fundamental importance in bringing about a qualitative change in their bilateral relations.

The leaders of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation reaffirmed the determination of the sides to increase, on the basis of that strategic document, their joint efforts with a view to intensifying and improving the effectiveness of wide-ranging cooperation in all fields.

The most important outcome of the talks was the conclusion of the Treaty between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation on Economic Cooperation and the corresponding Programme for 1998-2007, which have opened up new perspectives for the mutually advantageous development of trade, industrial cooperation, investment and scientific and technological cooperation in key areas, and the intensification of ties between regions and economic agents.

The Presidents signed the Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation on the Settlement of Financial Matters. They noted with satisfaction that, through their joint efforts, they had managed to find a mutually acceptable solution to this important problem, which should ensure the stability of financial and economic cooperation between the two countries, including the operation under lease of the Baikonur complex and other facilities in the territory of Kazakhstan.

The heads of State discussed the question of the legal registration of the State border between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation and signed the relevant Protocol under which the Governments of the parties shall begin, in 1999, negotiations on the demarcation of the State border between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

A considerable number of intergovernmental and interdepartmental instruments were signed, including agreements on social rights and guarantees for civilians residing and/or working at the Baikonur complex, the establishment and conditions for the operation of information and cultural centres, cooperation in combating illegal traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, cooperation and mutual assistance to combat unlawful financial operations involving the legalization of illegal income, and conditions for the establishment and servicing of diplomatic missions of Kazakhstan in the Russian Federation and of the Russian Federation in Kazakhstan.

The Presidents expressed their support for the further intensification of Kazakh-Russian cooperation in the humanitarian field, including constructive interaction to guarantee the rights of citizens and subjects of the parties residing in the territory of the other party. In that context, they stressed the importance of the regular joint work of the human rights commissions attached to the offices of the Presidents of the two countries.

The exchange of views demonstrated the unity of the Presidents of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation in their fundamental approach to assessing the role and place of, and prospects for, the activities of the Commonwealth of Independent States in acting the interests of all its members.

In the light of developments on the Commonwealth's external borders and in adjacent regions, the Presidents spoke out in favour of extending the Treaty on Collective Security of 15 May 1992.

In their discussion of international problems, Mr. Nazarbaev and Mr. Yeltsin expressed their deep concern at the continuing bloody conflict in Afghanistan. They emphasized the importance of close cooperation among Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and other countries of the Commonwealth to find ways of safeguarding its southern borders. Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation are firmly convinced that peace and stability in Afghanistan can be achieved only through a political dialogue between the parties to the conflict, under United Nations auspices and with the mediation of interested States in the spirit of Security Council resolution 1193 (1998) of 28 August 1998.

The talks between the Presidents of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation were held in the usual atmosphere of mutual understanding and constructive cooperation, which are characteristic of relations between the leaders of the two States.

The State visit of the President of the Russian Federation to Kazakhstan marked a new stage in the strengthening of friendship between the two countries and peoples.

The President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, expressed his thanks to the leaders and people of Kazakhstan for their warm welcome and invited the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, to make a State visit to the Russian Federation.

The invitation was accepted with gratitude. The time of the visit will be agreed on at a later date.

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1 October 1998

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 62
QUESTION OF CYPRUS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 30 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government and further to my letter dated 15 September 1998 (A/53/393-S/1998/858), I have the honour to draw your attention to new violations of the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus and of the flight information region of Nicosia by military aircraft of the Turkish Air Force, which took place on 17, 18 and 29 September 1998.

On 17 September 1998, two Turkish RF-4F military aircraft entered the northern part of the Nicosia flight information region in violation of international air traffic regulations and of the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus, flying over the area of Kormakitis in the Karpasia region and the south-western area of Paphos and then exiting towards the Ankara flight information region.

On 18 September 1998, 12 Turkish military aircraft (8F-16, 4F-4) entered the south-western Nicosia flight information region in violation of international air traffic regulations and thereafter exited towards the Ankara flight information region.

On the same day, three Turkish military transport aircraft (2 C-130 and 1 C-160) and one CN235 (in a search and rescue mission) entered the northern Nicosia flight information region, flying over the Cape of Apostle Andreas and exiting thereafter towards the Ankara flight information region. The transport aircraft violated the south-western Nicosia flight information region as well. All the aircraft exited towards the Ankara flight information region.

On 29 September 1998, two RF-4F military aircraft of the Turkish Air Force entered the Nicosia flight information region, violating the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus and international air traffic regulations. The aircraft flew over the area of Kormakitis in the Karpasia region and thereafter

one of them violated anew the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus, flying over the southern part of Larnaca and Limassol, south-west of Paphos and Cape Arnaoutis, while the second one continued its flight within the Nicosia flight information region, at the perimeter of the island. Thereafter, the two aircraft departed towards the Ankara flight information region.

As stated in my previous letters, such intrusions into the Nicosia flight information region and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus are in violation of international air traffic rules and, at the same time, they are in contravention of the provisions of the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus, which state that such overflights increase tension on the island and undermine efforts towards achieving a final settlement.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, I wish to strongly protest against these new provocative acts by Turkey against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus. These acts are in blatant disregard of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant decisions of the Organization on the question of Cyprus. These continuing overflights by the Turkish Air Force and the presence of the Turkish military occupation forces on the island constitute the underlying causes of tension in Cyprus.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 62, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sotirios ZACKHEOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Security Council

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S/1998/910
1 October 1998
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ORIGINAL: ARABIC

IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 1 OCTOBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 30 September 1998 from the Vice-President and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq giving examples of the extravagant claims that have been submitted to the United Nations Compensation Commission in a manner incompatible with the relevant Security Council resolutions and for the purpose of seeking unjust enrichment at Iraq's expense.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

98-28900 (E) 021098 021098

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Annex

Identical letters dated 30 September 1998 from the Vice-President and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I refer to the letter dated 22 July 1997 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq (S/1997/587, annex), in which examples were given of the category "F" claims (governmental claims) that had been submitted to the United Nations Compensation Commission and were set forth in the nineteenth report of the Executive Secretary to the Commission's Governing Council (S/AC.26/1997/R.7). In that report, information had been given on claims of which the least that can be said is that they were extravagant, were made on false pretences and lacked any legal basis. They were politically motivated and had the basic purpose of harming Iraq's people and its fundamental interests, impoverishing its national economy and seeking unjust enrichment at its expense. This amounts to deliberate insistence on bankrupting the Iraqi people and depriving it of its right to life and to development in violation of the most elementary norms of international law, the principles of justice and fairness and even the relevant Security Council resolutions. With regard to compensation, resolution 687 (1991), stipulates that account should be taken of the requirements of the people of Iraq, of Iraq's capacity to pay and of the needs of the Iraqi economy.

The Executive Secretary's twentieth report (S/AC.26/1997/R.13), twenty-first report (S/AC.26/1997/R.22) and twenty-second report (S/AC.26/1998/R.1) all contain examples of fantastic and inconceivable claims.

We cite, by way of example, from section II of the twenty-first report, entitled "Significant factual and legal cases", and from the items under the heading "Claims for losses arising in the tourism industry", as follows:

> "9. One claimant from the Netherlands is an incoming tour operator specializing in the organization of special interest tours throughout Europe. These tours were organized in the fields of sports, music, art and culture. The claimant alleges that it suffered a substantial decline in business during the period of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The claimant asserts that for the autumn and winter of 1990-1991 several pre-arranged tours were organized for clients from the United States. The claimant alleges that all the tours were cancelled because of the threat of military activity in the Persian Gulf region and the risk that United States citizens might be subject to terrorist attacks. The claimant seeks compensation for the loss of revenues and profit which it asserts would otherwise have been earned had the pre-arranged tours not been cancelled.
>
> "10. Another claim has been filed by a tour operator and travel agent from the Netherlands whose business primarily consisted of organizing holiday trips to Turkey. The claimant alleges that, as a result of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, many Dutch clients cancelled their pre-arranged bookings for tours to Turkey because of Turkey's proximity to Iraq and concerns as to the personal security of tourists. The claimant further

alleges that despite the fact that its clients had cancelled their pre-arranged tours, it was still obliged to pay for guaranteed flight seats that it had pre-booked on a block basis with airlines prior to the invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The claimant seeks compensation for the loss of profits that it allegedly sustained as a result of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait."

We also cite two paragraphs from the Executive Secretary's twentieth report, as follows:

"47. Several claimants from Israel, mostly owners and operators of hotels, allege that between 2 August 1990 and 2 March 1991, as a direct result of the threat of Scud missiles being launched by Iraq against Israel and the risk that the country might be drawn directly into the conflict, tourism to all parts of Israel declined significantly and, in some cases, virtually ceased. Most such claimants have calculated their losses by comparing the average occupancy rates for the months preceding, covering and succeeding the period of the invasion. The claims are based on the alleged differences between expected and actual income earned during the relevant period.

"48. Some Israeli claimants also seek recovery for losses allegedly suffered during the months of March and April 1991, arguing that tourism in Israel did not revert to its pre-war level immediately after the cessation of hostilities."

These claims, some of which we have quoted, are like the other claims we quoted in our previous letter on this subject. They are motivated by the attempt to seek unjust enrichment at the expense of Iraq, which is irreconcilable with the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. They form an endless concatenation and have no rational limit, in violation of the norms of international law and the international precedents, and their acceptance would give free play to untrue or exaggerated allegations. As we have said before, it is astonishing that the United Nations Compensation Commission should give consideration to frivolous and extravagant claims such as these.

I request you to have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Taha Yasin RAMADAM
Vice-President of the Republic
Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs

UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

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S/1998/911
29 September 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 29 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SUDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Please find attached herewith statements issued by the United States delegation led by Ramsey Clark, former United States Attorney General, which returned from Khartoum after its visit to Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory that was destroyed by United States bombs on 20 August 1998 (see annex).

The delegation stated that they have abundant documentation that the United States charges are completely false.

I should be grateful if you could distribute the present letter and its annex as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Elfatih ERWA
Permanent Representative

98-29027 (E) 021098

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Annex

Statements issued by the International Action Center

U.S. solidarity delegation visits Sudan

On Sept. 15 a delegation from the International Action Center, headed by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, left for the Sudan. The human rights delegation will visit the site of the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant destroyed by U.S. cruise missiles on Aug. 20.

The El Shifa plant, which went into production just two years ago, raised Sudan's self-sufficiency in medicine from 3 percent to over 50 percent and produced enough veterinary medicine for all of Africa.

Since the bombing the U.S. has been unable to offer a shred of evidence to justify this wanton act of terrorism. Protests have taken to the streets across the U.S. and throughout the world.

In solidarity with the Sudanese, the delegation is bringing $25,000 worth of antibiotics and anit-malaria medicines. The group includes Dr. Sapphire Ahmed, an African American physician who has previously worked in the Sudan, and Dr. Mohamed Haque, president of the Islamic Medical Association. Sara Flounders, John Parker and Richard Becker are representing the IAC.

The group, which includes a videographer, plans to visit hospitals, health clinics and refugee centers and to interview doctors, representatives of UN agencies and women's organizations. The goal is to assess how the destruction of El Shifa plant impacts on health in the region.

Sara Flounders, a coordinator of the IAC, pointed out, "If the U.S. had bombed a Sudanese hospital, that would have deprived the patients in that facility of medical care. But destroying a vital pharmaceutical plant creates a health crisis in Sudan and all across Africa that will continue to reverberate. This was a far more destructive and calculated terror attack by the Pentagon."

When the delegation returns, members will present reports and video and photographic evidence of their fact-finding trip. For more information, call the International Action Center.

U.S. Delegation Led by Ramsey Clark Returns From Fact-Finding Mission in Sudan

Clark Calls for "Restitution" in Destruction of Sudanese Factory

Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General, and a delegation from the International Action Center (IAC) will return to the U.S. early September 22 after a fact-finding mission to Sudan. During their mission they visited the Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory that was destroyed by U.S. bombs on August 20, 1998. The delegation interviewed surviving workers, families of the victims of the surprise attack, UN representatives, and visited refugee centers.

Speaking on September 20 at a demonstration of thousands of Sudanese people, Ramsey Clark apologized for the destruction of the Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory and called for the U.S. to make financial restitution, according the Associated Press reports.

"The U.S. claimed that they had credible evidence that the Al Shifa plant was producing weapons, but that's a lie," said Sara Flounders co-coordinator of the IAC a member of the delegation to Sudan.

"**The fact is, we have abundant documentation that the U.S. charges are completely false**. This was a life-saving pharmaceutical factory. Even the *New York Times* said in an article on Monday that the decision to destroy the only pharmaceutical factory in Sudan was based on guesswork. The U.S. wanted to punish the Sudanese for their independence and to show the world that the Pentagon can and will bomb anywhere, anytime with impunity."

The Al Shifa plant, that went into production just two years ago, raised Sudan's self-sufficiency in medicine from 3 percent to over 50 percent and produced enough veterinary medicine for all of Africa.

A public meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 14 at the International Action Center's office at 39 West 14th Street at 7:00 p.m. Video evidence and eyewitness testimony will expose the U.S. bombing and its ongoing effects on the people of Sudan.

For information or an interview with the delegation call 212-633-6646.

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3 October 1998

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PREPARED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTIONS 1160 (1998) AND 1199 (1998) OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998 and 1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998. In its resolution 1160 (1998), the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed on the situation in Kosovo and to provide an assessment on whether the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had complied in a constructive manner with conditions put forward by the Contact Group. In its resolution 1199 (1998), the Council further requested me to provide regular reports to it as necessary on my assessment of compliance with that resolution by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and all elements in the Kosovo Albanian community, including through my regular reports on compliance with resolution 1160 (1998). The present report covers the period since my previous report, dated 4 September 1998, prepared pursuant to resolution 1160 (1998) (S/1998/834).

II. SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 1160 (1998

2. As at 2 October 1998, a total of 51 States, listed in my earlier reports (S/1998/608, S/1998/712 and S/1998/834), as well as Ireland and the Russian Federation, had reported to the Committee established pursuant to paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998), in accordance with paragraph 12 of that resolution, on the steps they had taken to give effect to the prohibitions imposed by the same resolution. In a note verbale dated 15 September 1998, the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations, on behalf of the European Union, transmitted to the Chairman of the Committee the second special report from the European Community Monitoring Mission containing its observations pertaining to the Albania/Kosovo border.

3. It will be recalled that on 21 July 1998, the Security Council adopted resolution 1186 (1998), by which it mandated the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) to perform tasks of monitoring the border areas and to report to me on illicit arms flows and other activities that are prohibited

under resolution 1160 (1998). In this connection I would like to refer to paragraph 5 of my previous report (S/1998/834) and to inform the Council that I have not yet received any suggestions on the establishment of an integrated coordinating mechanism of which UNPREDEP would form a part.

III. SITUATION IN KOSOVO

4. The present report is based on information regarding the situation on the ground from the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Contact Group and individual Member States. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara A. Otunnu, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, visited the region from 10 to 12 September and from 24 to 29 September respectively and reported to me on their findings. As the present report was being finalized, the Secretariat received a factual report from NATO on the military situation in Kosovo following the adoption of resolution 1199 (1998). The information provided therein is reflected in the report. Reports have also been received from the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission. In addition to other information provided (see annex), the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE indicated to me that, despite a number of approaches, the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had not changed their position vis-à-vis the earlier requests of OSCE, including the acceptance of the mission of Felipe González or prospective OSCE missions, including one in Kosovo.

Hostilities

5. During the reporting period, fighting in Kosovo continued unabated. Government security forces conducted offensives in the various parts of Kosovo, including the areas of Licovac, Glogovac and Cicavica. In the week following the adoption, on 23 September 1998, of resolution 1199 (1998), the forces in fact intensified their operations, launching another offensive in the Drenica region and in the Suva Reka-Stimlje-Urosevac triangle. Those operations have reportedly resulted in the displacement of some 20,000 additional people. Smaller operations were conducted by the Serbian security forces in the Prizren area. Fighting continued on 28 and 29 September, contrary to the statement of the Serbian Prime Minister, Mr. Marjanovic, on 28 September, that anti-insurgency operations in Kosovo had been completed and that peace reigned in Kosovo.

6. Military activity seemed to wind down in the last days of September. There was evidence of heavily armoured formations returning to their barracks. On 29 September, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Zivadin Jovanovic assured me that troops were returning to the places of their permanent location. According to the most recent reports, military forces withdrew from the Drenica and Prizren areas on 1 October and observers indicated a decrease in activities of the security forces. However, the Secretariat is still receiving information that the Government's armed presence remains significant and that the operations of the special police continue.

7. The desperate situation of the civilian population remains the most disturbing aspect of the hostilities in Kosovo. I am particularly concerned that civilians increasingly have become the main target in the conflict. Fighting in Kosovo has resulted in a mass displacement of civilian populations, the extensive destruction of villages and means of livelihood and the deep trauma and despair of displaced populations. Many villages have been destroyed by shelling and burning following operations conducted by federal and Serbian government forces. There are concerns that the disproportionate use of force and actions of the security forces are designed to terrorize and subjugate the population, a collective punishment to teach them that the price of supporting the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units is too high and will be even higher in future. The Serbian security forces have demanded the surrender of weapons and have been reported to use terror and violence against civilians to force people to flee their homes or the places where they had sought refuge, under the guise of separating them from fighters of the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units. The tactics include shelling, detentions and threats to life, and finally short-notice demands to leave or face the consequences. There have been disruptions in electricity and other services, and empty dwellings have been burned and looted, abandoned farm vehicles have been destroyed, and farm animals have been burned in their barns or shot in the fields. For example, international observers witnessed Serb troops looting and burning houses in the Suva Reka area on 27 September.

8. The level of destruction points clearly to an indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilian populations. As of mid-September, an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 buildings in 269 villages had been severely damaged or destroyed by shelling and deliberate burning in the Serb forces' main areas of operations. Information available to me from reliable sources covered only villages - not cities - in western and central Kosovo. If the rate of destruction observed in the first two weeks of September were to continue, an estimated total of 9,000 homes in nearly 300 settlements would be uninhabitable (without significant reconstruction) by early November.

Human rights

9. I am outraged by reports of mass killings of civilians in Kosovo, which recall the atrocities committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following reports concerning the killing of 20 Kosovo Albanian internally displaced persons in Gornje Obrinje in the central Drenica area on 28 September, a Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission team witnessed at least 14 bodies, some severely mutilated. Most were children and women at ages ranging from 18 months to 95 years. The Serb authorities denied any involvement of the police force in those atrocities. However, further killings of Kosovo civilians were reported, including the alleged summary execution of some 12 to 23 males (accounts vary) in the Golubovac area on 27 September. The Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission conducted a preliminary investigation in the area and observed pools of blood in the dirt, tools presumably used to stab the victims and small-calibre shell casings.

10. While the victims of the conflict are overwhelmingly ethnic Albanians, Kosovo Serbs are suffering as well. There have been a number of reports of the kidnapping and killing of Serbian and Albanian civilians by Kosovo Albanian

paramilitary units. The village of Zocite, which was once half-Serb and half-Kosovo Albanian, now has only 30 Serbs, and 80 per cent of the houses were burned and destroyed during the period of several months when the village was under the control of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units. Mass graves of Serbs were discovered in Klecka, Glodjane and Ratis. The Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission investigated the latest mass grave in Glodjane. The ambushing of members of the security forces by the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units has led to reprisals, not only by the Serbian authorities, but also by armed Serb civilians, against the innocent population.

Humanitarian situation

11. The pattern of displacement is fast-changing and unpredictable as people flee in response to the actions and real or perceived threats of the security forces. Even though there have been some returns, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than 200,000 persons remain displaced in Kosovo and some 80,000 are in neighbouring countries and other parts of Serbia. Shifting operations by Serb security forces and the Yugoslav army have continued to uproot new groups of Kosovars and to keep relief efforts off-balance. Although reporting indicated that approximately 30,000 to 50,000 internally displaced persons in Kosovo had recently returned to their homes, the total number of internally displaced persons remains unchanged, offset by the most recent government offensives. International monitors have been told that displaced persons are refusing to return home because of their fear of reprisals, and a number of displaced people have been arrested by the security forces upon returning home.

12. In Albania, while the estimated number of refugees is relatively small (some 20,000), the political and economic impact of their presence is clearly felt. The poor infrastructure and rampant lawlessness in some areas magnify the impact of the arrival of refugees. The harsh winter and insecurity in Bajram Curri led to the closure of the UNHCR office there, where only 2,500 refugees remain. The High Commissioner requested a quick decision on the allocation of land and buildings for collective accommodation in more suitable locations. The internal situation in Albania, however, is likely to delay this allocation and the adoption of legislation on refugees.

13. With 45,000 recent arrivals from Kosovo, Montenegro now has about the same number of displaced persons as at the height of the war in 1993 - some 12 per cent of the population. The High Commissioner for Refugees told President Djukanovic that while the reasons for the closure of the border with Kosovo announced on 11 September were understandable, she urged him to reverse the decision. President Djukanovic gave assurances that the decision would be implemented flexibly, with individual situations considered. He also gave assurances that there would be no more forced returns to Kosovo or expulsions to Albania. The High Commissioner pledged additional support for assistance programmes and noted a positive response to the August 1998 inter-agency appeal for the Kosovo crisis.

14. There are some 7,000 Kosovo Albanian asylum-seekers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the number continues to rise. The Government has finally adopted an instruction on the treatment of asylum-seekers. Finding satisfactory

accommodation is now the main problem, given the already very heavy pressure on housing.

15. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia there are an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 Kosovo Albanians whose presence is directly linked to the conflict. Citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia do not need an entry visa for a two-month stay, and the Government has just formally agreed to regularize the status of those who have exceeded this period. Some 500 persons have approached UNHCR and its partners for assistance. A large-scale influx is thought unlikely but cannot be excluded.

16. The Government claims that some 100,000 refugees have returned to their homes (independent estimates are some 30,000 to 50,000) and has pledged to facilitate the process of returns. At present, the authorities have opened 12 centres around Kosovo to provide assistance to internally displaced persons. In some of them, ethnic Albanians are employed. An immediate and fundamental change in the Serbian authorities' approach is, however, essential. Without it, indicators of different stages in the underlying cycle of violence and repression - for example, the end of one offensive, fluctuations in the number of those affected, displaced or without shelter or returnees - will have only short-term significance. The current policy and methods used by the authorities predictably cause large-scale and often repeated displacement and a well-founded fear of mistreatment by the security forces upon return. Many internally displaced persons were reportedly prevented from returning to their homes and were forced to move elsewhere. There are a number of reports of detentions and arrests of able-bodied men, some of whom are still unaccounted for. Such an attitude, combined with information about atrocities committed against civilians, has generated fear among many internally displaced persons, preventing them from returning. Thus, the absence of adequate security remains the main obstacle to return.

17. With only a few weeks before the onset of winter, the issue of the return of displaced persons and refugees remains one of the most pressing issues. Some 50,000 internally displaced persons currently lack shelter or any support network, and are ill-prepared for inclement winter weather that may arrive as early as next month. The priority of any humanitarian strategy should be to assist these people. Children and the elderly will almost certainly risk death from exposure if they remain at their current locations - especially the ones at higher elevations - into the winter.

18. While the major focus is on immediate needs, such as the return of internally displaced persons and the provision of urgent assistance to those still living in the open air, it is also necessary to address broader humanitarian issues. As most of the displaced persons in Kosovo are staying with families, assistance has to be provided to a much broader segment of the population. The host families that support most of them are beginning to deplete their personal food stocks. In this regard, an important element, in addition to providing assistance to local host families, is the removal of an unofficial blockade of Kosovo by the Serbian authorities.

19. The Government has appealed to internally displaced persons, encouraging them to return. However, after six months of hostilities, mere declarations

appear to be insufficient to ensure their return. The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must be made to assume its full responsibility of guaranteeing security for returnees as well as punishing those responsible for previous abuses and destruction.

20. I welcome the good intentions contained in the conclusions of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, adopted on 28 September, regarding the speedy resolution of all humanitarian problems in Kosovo, including the reconstruction of damaged houses and the adoption of concrete measures for health care as well as the overall normalization of the economy and supply. The National Assembly also indicated that the Government of Serbia would continue to cooperate fully with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNHCR with the basic goal of reducing as much as possible humanitarian problems and eliminating them soon through joint and concerted efforts, and would ensure the ability of humanitarian agencies to work unhindered. I am looking forward to seeing these assurances implemented in the most expeditious and effective way.

21. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees urged President Milosevic to stop the violence against civilians, the destruction and looting of deserted property and the random detention of able-bodied males. She stressed the importance of confidence-building measures such as amnesty, a reduction in the presence of a highly visible and intimidating security force, an end to the de facto commercial blockade imposed in Kosovo and the restoration of essential services. However, even those measures would have little impact without evidence of a real change of heart and approach.

The humanitarian response

22. There has been a significant increase in operational capacity, and coordination is good on the ground. UNHCR has strengthened both this capacity and its presence in order to discharge its lead agency responsibilities effectively. Coordination with UNHCR non-governmental organization partners, with ICRC and with the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission is of particular importance. UNHCR has a full-time liaison officer with the Mission.

23. Coordination with the provincial and local authorities and with representatives of the Kosovo Albanian community is no less important. The High Commissioner for Refugees underlined to President Milosevic that the beneficiaries must have confidence in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and that a key role had to be played by such agencies as the Mother Theresa Society.

24. Although aid agencies have significantly expanded their operations in Kosovo, total requirements are not being met because of the restrictive environment in which aid agencies operate. The security operations have continued to delay relief convoys travelling to populations in need until they have deemed an area "secure", have carried out protracted shelling of targets in close proximity to large groups of internally displaced persons and have displayed extremely heavy-handed behaviour when dealing with displaced persons. While overall freedom of movement for humanitarian agencies and international observers has improved, it does not apply to internally displaced persons or, in

certain cases, to journalists. Moreover, continued fighting and security operations in the area have impeded the access of monitors and the delivery of humanitarian aid. There is an urgent need for non-governmental organizations to be given access and for clearance to be granted for humanitarian supplies. To date, non-governmental organizations have been denied radio clearance, thereby jeopardizing the coordination of life-saving operations and personal security.

25. It has been reported that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has undertaken the systematic deployment of both anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines in the border areas with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the areas of fighting within Kosovo itself, however, there have so far been only isolated reports of the use of anti-personnel landmines. However, a Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission vehicle recently hit a mine, and on 1 October an ICRC vehicle ran into an anti-tank mine in the same area. Since the laying of landmines could become a trend, the early deployment of a United Nations Mine Action Service team could become necessary. It should be given clearance to assess the situation of landmines in conflict areas. This will be fundamental to the return process and will also help to ensure the safe and free movement of humanitarian personnel and international observers.

Political settlement

26. There is a need to create a favourable climate for the process of negotiating a political settlement of the Kosovo crisis. I welcome in this regard the efforts of the international community to bring about a political solution to the problem and support the efforts of the Contact Group, and in particular Ambassador Christopher Hill, to negotiate a political settlement between the Serb authorities and Kosovo Albanian leaders, of whom Dr. Rugova remains the most prominent figure, although his leadership is contested by the Albanian opposition and Kosovar paramilitary units. Following the discussion of the Kosovo issue at the meeting of the Contact Group in London on 2 October, the Chairman communicated to me his conclusions:

> "The Contact Group is united and intends to be united. We expect full and immediate compliance with Security Council resolution 1199. This has not so far been achieved.
>
> "We heard a report on the work of the U.S. facilitator, Ambassador Hill, on the negotiating track. We endorsed a revised paper which will now be put to the parties on behalf of the Contact Group.
>
> "We are united in condemning what is happening on the ground and in support for humanitarian efforts.
>
> "We all concluded that time is running out."

27. I support the Chairman's conclusions and believe that there is no alternative to a direct dialogue in search of a mutually acceptable settlement in the interest of all people of Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The consequences of the current repressive approach not only affect the immediate humanitarian situation, they also have a direct and major adverse impact on the prospects for a just and lasting political solution. Even once

there is a fundamentally new approach by Belgrade, the task of correcting the very deep-rooted damage of the last years, and in particular the last months, will be enormous.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

28. In the last few weeks, the international community has witnessed appalling atrocities in Kosovo, reminiscent of the recent past elsewhere in the Balkans. These have been borne out by reporting by the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission and other reliable sources. I reiterate my utter condemnation of such wanton killing and destruction. It is clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the great majority of such acts have been committed by security forces in Kosovo acting under the authority of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. But Kosovar Albanian paramilitary units have engaged in armed action also, and there is good reason to believe that they too have committed atrocities. All those involved in the killing and mistreatment of civilians and in the destruction of property must be brought to justice. There is a need for a thorough investigation, under effective international control or with international participation, of all reported cases of atrocities and violations of human rights.

29. The Security Council has reaffirmed the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have the inherent right, as well as the duty, to maintain public order and security and to respond to violent acts of provocation. However, this can in no way justify the systematic terror inflicted on civilians these past few days and weeks. It is the duty of security forces to give equal protection to all citizens, not to intimidate or murder them. It is equally necessary, as called for by the Security Council, for terrorist action, including the taking of hostages by Kosovar Albanian elements, to cease.

30. If the present state of affairs persists, thousands could die in the winter. In my earlier statements on the situation in Kosovo, I have emphasized this danger repeatedly and appealed to the international community to undertake urgent steps in order to prevent a humanitarian disaster. The possibilities of asylum outside Kosovo are ever more limited, and much of the shelter available clearly is inadequate for winter. Conditions must be created that would allow for the return of a significant number of internally displaced persons. This requires a radical change of policy and behaviour and the introduction of confidence-building measures - such as a withdrawal of police units, a declaration of amnesty and a release of prisoners. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia authorities assert that such steps have already been taken. According to reports from the field, the withdrawal so far appears limited, and it would seem that the fear that led civilians to flee remains. For all internally displaced persons, the first priority is the restoration of security. The Government must restrain police excesses and give police instructions to respect international human rights conventions. Greater efforts are also required to improve access to prisoners taken by the authorities and to secure the release of, or accounting for, hostages taken by the Kosovar Albanian side.

31. It is my earnest hope that the negotiations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Albanian leadership will be resumed without delay and produce early agreements, and that they will result in the restoration of confidence that is needed for a return and resettlement of all those who have fled their homes in fear. Such agreements might also envisage more far-reaching steps, possibly even institutional reforms, to address long-term needs. If there is to be a role for the international community in assisting in the implementation of such agreements, it will require a proper assessment of needs that would take humanitarian as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction requirements fully into account. The necessary operational planning must be conducted, including an appropriate division of labour, and effective implementation and coordination mechanisms. I would like to express my hope that these considerations will be borne in mind by those involved in the negotiations. It would in my view be useful, in this regard, to initiate consultations amongst international actors to prepare to face such a challenge, without necessarily awaiting the agreements. The United Nations is prepared to play an active role in such consultations.

32. I believe that action is urgently required on several fronts. The violence on all sides has to be brought to a halt. Full humanitarian access must be granted. Conditions need to be created that will enable refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes with confidence that they will not face harassment or worse. It is imperative that the international presence be strengthened and made more effective. In particular, it would be helpful if, in the immediate term, the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission were brought to its full strength and if the presence of human rights observers were enhanced. Also, it will be essential to ensure the closest possible coordination of international efforts in the political, humanitarian and other fields. A broad range of options could be considered in that regard.

33. In the present report, as in previous ones issued pursuant to Security Council resolution 1160 (1998), I have had to rely largely on information and analysis from sources external to the United Nations. I am grateful for these contributions, which carry conviction and are reflected in the body of the report. But, unlike reports to the Council on missions or operations where the United Nations has a direct political presence on the ground, I do not have the means necessary to provide an independent assessment of compliance, as required by the Security Council in paragraph 15 of resolution 1199 (1998), other than on the humanitarian situation. Therefore, the Council may wish to make its own judgement in this respect on the basis of the present report. As the Council has affirmed in its resolution 1199 (1998), the deterioration in the situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, constitutes a threat to peace and security in the region. It is widely recognized in the international community that the humanitarian crisis is a consequence of what is fundamentally a political problem, which requires a comprehensive political solution through a negotiated settlement.

34. While I fully share the sense of indignation and revulsion at what has been happening in Kosovo, the international community must never lose sight of the ultimate need for a comprehensive political solution. Otherwise, we shall be treating only the symptoms of the problem, and not its causes.

Annex

Information on the situation in Kosovo and measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, submitted pursuant to paragraphs 13 and 16 of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998)

General situation

The period since the previous report (S/1998/834/Add.1) has been characterized by a decrease in military operations after the offensive against armed groups of Kosovo Albanians launched by Serb forces in August.

During the second half of August only limited military actions were observed. However, house-to-house searches were carried out and the number of mine accidents increased. In the first week of September the area of Kosovo bordering north-eastern Albania was relatively calm, but continued fighting was observed towards the south, on the outskirts of Djakovica and in villages nearby. During September Yugoslav forces continued to pound villages to stamp out any traces of resistance, the burning of houses continued in the area south of Prizren and military operations commenced in the area of Orahovac with a starting line at Zrze-Orahovac and moving west.

At the end of August, Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters admitted that because of serious setbacks and lack of success with previous tactics they would resort to "hit and run" operations. Similar views were presented by Adem Demaci, leader of the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo and recently appointed political representative of the Kosovo Liberation Army. In late August, he stated to the media that the group would now adopt classic guerrilla warfare tactics against Yugoslav targets after losing territory during the recent Serbian offensive.

At the beginning of September, the United States Ambassador to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Peace Envoy, Christopher Hill, announced that an outline agreement had been reached between the Kosovo Albanians and the Belgrade authorities on the future of Kosovo. The agreement, based on options featured in the document of the Contact Group, envisages a three-year stabilization and normalization period to allow for the re-establishment of democratic institutions. It was also agreed that indirect talks should continue, despite the fact that indirect talks had as yet been fruitless.

Still, there is confusion as to just who the Kosovo Albanians making such an agreement represent. Hitherto, there has been little success in the attempts to persuade the Albanian Democratic Movement (LDS), a party created in late June 1998 and led by Mr. Rexhep Qosja, a former ally of Rugova, to join the negotiations. Moreover, the political representative of KLA, Mr. Demaci, sees any temporary agreement as a capitulation and has pledged to continue the fighting. But the fact that some returnees have handed over their weapons to Serb forces is seen as an indication that segments of the Albanian population are prepared to accept whatever interim political agreement is reached.

In this respect there are increasing indications of splits among Albanian fighting groups. With sharp divisions within the Kosovo Albanian ranks, the problem of just who represents them will likely continue and the prospects of a ceasefire called by KLA and the Serbian authorities currently appear remote.

Monitoring activities in Kosovo

The Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission has continued its activity despite the growing aversion on the part of Serb security forces and KLA. The Mission is composed of several tens of people representing European Union (EU) States, the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Canada. Every week there are about 50 to 60 observation trips and a report on the situation is presented and further accepted in Belgrade by the ambassadors of the Contact Group States (the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Russian Federation and the United States of America) and Austria (EU Presidency) and Poland (Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)).

Regardless of the missions, Kosovo has been regularly visited by employees of embassies accredited to Belgrade. Also, politicians and diplomats on a visit to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia used to go to Kosovo.

The situation of the civilian population

Fighting has forced more than 200,000 people to flee their homes. The situation is made worse by large-scale destruction of houses, food shortages and the risk of epidemic. The threat of humanitarian catastrophe is becoming ever more real. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), large numbers of displaced persons, as many as 50,000, are today living out in the open in Kosovo. Many others are living in desperate conditions as entire villages have been destroyed, livestock slaughtered and fields burned.

Although great emphasis has been given recently to the return of displaced persons, the return process is hampered by the level of destruction in some villages, and, for those who can return to relatively undamaged areas, the issue of security is paramount. The presence of Serb security forces in many areas continues to create a feeling of insecurity on the part of those wishing to return.

Several cases of large-scale detentions have been reported on different occasions where men of fighting age suspected of being separatist guerrillas were separated from the women, children and elderly by police, backed by armoured vehicles, and taken to places of detention for interrogation.

Analysis of the Kosovo conflict spillover potential

As at 1 September, UNHCR was reporting a total of 14,000 refugees in Albania of which 7,000 remained in the Tropoja district, the rest having left for other parts of the country. Still, reliable statistics are difficult to compile owing to the fluid nature of the situation. According to Albanian sources there are about 7,500 registered refugees in the Bajram Curri area and

7,500 in central Albania, particularly in the Durrës area. Out of a total of 15,000 persons (6,100 families), about 1,000 live in accommodations provided by the Government and the rest live with ordinary families.

The relative decrease in incoming refugees during the summer in the Tropoja and Has districts was caused by the tightening of the border by Yugoslav forces: the creation of a cordon sanitaire along the border west of Djakovica (Dečane-Ponoševac-Djakovica road and Dečane-Skrivljan-Djakovica road), heavier controls by the Yugoslav authorities on the routes over the mountains and the laying of mines. The need for refugees to find more arduous routes through this area in order to avoid detection resulted in many refugees trying to enter Albania through Montenegro. It was estimated that, by the end of August, approximately 100 to 120 refugees a day were entering the Shkodčr-Koplik area through Montenegro. During the first two weeks of September, the number of refugees crossing into Albania increased steadily, indicating an opening of safe corridors through the border.

The readiness of the local population to accommodate a vast majority of the refugees, mainly elderly people, women and children, largely facilitated the immediate handling of the major influx. However, it put further strain on the local Albanian population already living under difficult or even harsh economic and social conditions. Evidence suggests that the absorption capacities are exhausted. This underlines the importance of establishing appropriate shelter facilities, preferably in other parts of Albania, in order to alleviate current and potential needs before the winter.

In this respect, in the first week of September, the Kosovo refugee issue was discussed in the Albanian Parliament, and the respective parliamentary commissions severely criticized the Government for failing to take measures to accommodate the refugees from Kosovo, particularly with winter approaching.

According to the latest figures, the number of refugees in Montenegro (640,000 inhabitants) exceeds 45,000, which have to be added to the 30,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The Podgorica authorities have begun the organized transport of about 3,000 refugees from Kosovo to Albania across the unofficial Vrmos border crossing some three kilometres from Plav (south-east of Montenegro).

Numerous incidents between KLA units and the Yugoslav army and Serb police have been reported in the border areas. Many attempts have been recorded of the illegal crossing of the border by armed Albanians. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albania have accused one another of causing incidents on the border and of shooting in the other State's territory.

Measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

On 18 August 1998, in a letter addressed to the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Jovanovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Duve, expressed his concerns over lack of access for foreign journalists intending to cover events in Yugoslavia in a number of instances, considered as serious incidents and not consistent with OSCE principles and commitments. On 27 August, Mr. Duve addressed the Permanent

Council of OSCE, recalling the letters sent to the Yugoslav Foreign Minister and urging the Belgrade authorities to allow unimpeded access to the media to cover the events in the country, especially in Kosovo.

On 3 September 1998, Ambassador Hill addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna and assessed the current situation in the region, elaborating on the prospects for a negotiated settlement to the crisis in Kosovo. He made it very clear that violence must stop and that there can only be a peaceful solution to the problems of Kosovo, but emphasizing also that the search for political solutions should not be conditioned by the continued violence and that pursuing diplomatic action cannot wait until a ceasefire is called.

On the political negotiations, Ambassador Hill informed the Permanent Council that a new Albanian negotiating team composed of moderate and more radical Albanian participants had reached an agreement based on options featured in the document of the Contact Group. The agreement envisages a three-year stabilization and normalization period to allow for the re-establishment of democratic institutions, and after this period new approaches could be envisaged. He stressed the crucial importance of the international presence in Kosovo during the implementation period and the important role OSCE had to play in the area.

In her address to the Permanent Council on the same day, United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright elaborated on the same issue, stating that she foresaw a special role for OSCE in a possible negotiated settlement of the Kosovo conflict, especially with regard to elections.

In its continued efforts to monitor the situation on the borders of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, on 10 September the OSCE Permanent Council approved supplementary budgets for the continued enhancement of the OSCE presence in Albania and the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje.